



**Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme**



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**IMPROVEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE
TO ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES**

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report reviews the implementation of Governing Council decision 17/26, which called for the development of a mechanism to improve the United Nations capacity to respond to environmental emergencies. UNEP and the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs established the Joint UNEP/DHA Environment Unit following recommendations of a UNEP Governmental Advisory Meeting. The Joint Unit is facilitating the provision of international assistance, it is staffed by UNEP and is fully integrated into the existing response mechanism of the DHA Relief Coordination Branch, which has the mandate to respond to emergencies. This is a practical project which provides an independent backstop for countries facing environmental emergencies.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

1. Take note of the present report;
2. Express its satisfaction with and endorse constructive collaboration between UNEP and DHA in enhancing the ability of the United Nations to assist countries affected by environmental emergencies;
3. Welcome the establishment of the Joint UNEP/DHA Environment Unit;
4. Express its appreciation to DHA for providing the Joint Unit with emergency facilities and office space;

* UNEP/GC.18/1.

5. Note that the Joint Unit is rendering services in full accordance with recommendations of the UNEP Governmental Advisory Meeting, when international assistance is not otherwise provided within the framework of relevant existing conventions;
6. Welcome the establishment of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies, and endorse its terms of reference;
7. Request the Joint Unit to further develop its activities and services in accordance with recommendations of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies;
8. Invite Governments and relevant UN agencies, bodies and programmes to cooperate with the Joint Unit in its efforts to provide independent and unbiased assistance to countries facing environmental emergencies;
9. Request the Executive Director to allocate the necessary resources for the implementation of activities of the Joint Unit;
10. Further request the Executive Director to submit to the Governing Council at its nineteenth session a progress report on the implementation of the present decision.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with Governing Council decision 17/26 of 21 May 1993, extensive work has been undertaken to assess the needs of developing countries in terms of response to emergencies that affect or threaten the environment, and to examine current international response mechanisms. Gaps in the existing system have been identified and proposals made to rectify the situation. Extensive consultations with Governments identified the most appropriate needs. These include the need to utilize in the most efficient manner existing facilities and resources, the need to facilitate quick direct links between affected countries and potential providers of assistance and the need for rapid initial assessment in cases of accident. Countries indicated a preference for a simple mechanism in the United Nations to expedite the delivery of such assistance, including a single entry point to the system.

2. As requested by the Governing Council, a Governmental Advisory Meeting was convened by UNEP in November 1993. It adopted a set of proposals concerning the enhancement of the international response capacity to augment the existing international response system.

3. Taking into account these recommendations, as well as consultations with countries and United Nations bodies, UNEP and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) decided to simplify to the maximum extent possible the administrative and technical arrangements that would permit the delivery of an environmental emergency service to the international community. It was jointly recommended by the two bodies that core activities and services should be funded and provided by UNEP through the existing organizational framework of the Relief Coordination Branch of DHA.

4. Under these arrangements, UNEP retains substantive responsibility for the work to be done and functions in an effective operational association with DHA. In accordance with this joint recommendation, a small Joint UNEP/DHA Environment Unit ("the Joint Unit") was established in DHA as of 1 July 1994, to deal with environmental aspects of emergencies. The Human Health and Welfare Unit was appointed focal point for the Joint Unit within UNEP headquarters.

5. At its 45th meeting, the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP at its 45th meeting, considered the report of the Executive Director on the Joint Unit, endorsed the joint recommendation of UNEP and DHA, and requested the Executive Director to implement it for an initial period of 12 months and refer the question back to the Governing Council at its eighteenth session.

II. ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE JOINT UNEP/DHA ENVIRONMENT UNIT

6. Taking into account rapid industrial development in different regions, it is understood that major beneficiaries of the implementation of this project are Governments of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, competent national organizations, industrial associations, as well as relevant United Nations agencies and international organizations.

7. The objective of this joint project is to deliver an environmental emergency service to Governments upon request. In full accordance with the recommendations of the UNEP Governmental Advisory Meeting, it aims to improve mobilization and coordination of the international response to environmental emergencies, by developing and implementing practical brokerage functions, and establishing an efficient information clearing-house. Other assistance tools include the provision of independent and quick initial and post-emergency assessment, utilizing resources of donating countries and partners. Since its establishment, as well as in the preceding experimental stage, the Joint Unit has assisted a number of countries in responding to a variety of environmental emergencies by using its tools and capabilities.



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**POLICY ISSUES: COORDINATION AND COOPERATION WITHIN
THE UNITED NATIONS**

Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat
Desertification 1993-1994

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report is prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 35/73 of 5 December 1980 and 39/168 B of 17 December 1984, which requested the Governing Council to report, through the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (PACD). The present report summarizes the progress achieved in the implementation of the PACD, including in the Sudano-Sahelian region, during the period 1993-1994. It also puts forward proposed actions which the Council might wish to consider.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

(a) Express its support for ongoing efforts by the United Nations Environment Programme to support the development of an updated assessment methodology for drylands and desertification, including the development of appropriate indicators, based on improved national approaches involving communities, as well as its efforts in increasing awareness of desertification and in disseminating targeted information materials to a range of media;

(b) Request the Executive Director to maintain the function of UNEP as a global centre of excellence on desertification control, promoting cooperation and coordination of worldwide efforts to combat desertification and to continue and intensify research and development collaboration with leading world scientific institutions and centres of excellence on desertification and land degradation and drought issues, particularly on the social and economic aspects of these problems;

* UNEP/GC.18/1.

(c) Authorize the Executive Director to submit, on behalf of the Council, her report on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in 1993 and 1994, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session;

(d) Request the Executive Director to participate actively in assisting Governments and non-governmental and community-based organizations to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the resolution on urgent action for Africa adopted by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Convention and to support, within the limits of its available resources, the interim secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;

(e) Request the Executive Director to: (i) report to the Governing Council at its nineteenth session on the outcome of the ongoing negotiations with United Nations Development Programme to transform their joint venture to combat desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region into a Partnership to Combat Desertification and Drought; (ii) contribute to this Partnership, in the interim period before the nineteenth session, for earmarked programme activities to implement chapter 12 of Agenda 21 in developing countries, especially in Africa, and support the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the resolution for urgent action for Africa; and (iii) invite other organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, financial institutions, funds and other interested parties to join the Partnership and contribute to local, national, subregional and regional efforts of developing countries to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;

(f) Recommend to the General Assembly that: (i) the work of both the Inter-agency Working Group on Desertification and the Consultative Group for Desertification Control be discontinued in its present form and suggest their reconstitution into a single coordination group for following up the implementation of chapter 12 of Agenda 21 and other desertification and drought-related activities set out in Agenda 21, thereby serving inter alia, to assist the function of the task manager on desertification in reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development; and (ii) that the Executive Director, in collaboration with the members of the present Inter-agency Working Group on Desertification and the interim secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification, convene an ad hoc expert group to define the mandate of the new coordination group on desertification and advise on the roles of the different organizations and agencies in implementing chapter 12 of Agenda 21;

(g) Decide that reporting on activities in the Sudano-Sahelian region to implement the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification be subsumed in the reporting on activities of the United Nations Environment Programme worldwide for the implementation of chapter 12 of Agenda 21.

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 1993-1994

A. Technical assistance to Governments

1. In 1993-1994, UNEP continued to support Governments in developing and implementing national plans of action to combat desertification (NPACDs). The period was marked by an increase in activities as NPACDs were completed and launched, others began to be developed and other initiatives were begun.

2. NPACDs were launched and priority projects developed in Bahrain, Chile, Mexico, Mongolia, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Activities were initiated to develop NPACDs for Argentina, Bolivia and China, taking into account the more comprehensive approach demanded in the national action programmes to combat desertification (NAPCDs) called for under the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought. Preparatory activities were undertaken in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Kalmykia in the Russian Federation.

3. In addition, UNEP assisted Governments in other desertification-related activities, including seminars and programme reviews. During the reporting period evaluations were carried out on pilot village projects in Zimbabwe and Uganda, under the Cairo Programme for African Cooperation of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN).

B. Regional actions and networks

4. In 1993-1994, UNEP provided assistance in the spheres of policy and strategy, project development, desertification assessment, information and training, village workshops and sharing project experience, to subregional organizations in sub-Saharan Africa, the Conference of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE), the African Deserts and Arid Lands Committee (ADALCO) and the Desertification Control Research and Training Network for Asia and the Pacific (DESCONAP).

5. UNEP continued to serve as the secretariat for ADALCO and to support DESCONAP, particularly in the establishment of a DESCONAP Regional Office in Tehran and the organization of regional meetings. It also collaborated with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to strengthen the Regional Technical Cooperation Network on Arid and Semi-arid Lands in the Latin American and Caribbean region and provided assistance to coordination meetings and for the publication of a network newsletter.

C. Training

6. In 1993-1994, 1,025 participants from developing countries attended training courses in different aspects related to desertification control and dryland management, organized by UNEP and other members of the Inter-agency Working Group on Desertification (IAWGD), namely the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

D. Assessment and mapping

7. UNEP activity continued in this area, through evaluating project results and organizing and supporting activities to develop assessment and mapping methodologies and make them operational in pilot countries such as China, Kenya and Pakistan. Various studies, meetings and workshops considered other aspects of desertification assessment and land management, such as the interaction between climate and desertification, soil resilience, the assessment of degradation in cultivated soils, indicators of sustainability, land quality and community evaluation of project activities, appropriate technologies for sustainable land management and economic valuation of environment and natural resources.

E. Evaluation and monitoring

8. As the task manager for reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development on progress in implementing chapter 12 of Agenda 21, UNEP, in cooperation with other organizations, prepared the thematic report on desertification.

9. The evaluation of recommended "success-story" activities was continued. Ten case-studies were evaluated, eight were selected as having succeeded in sustainably controlling desertification and three were nominated for consideration for the Global 500 Award.

10. In environmental monitoring, UNEP support continued to the World Soil and Terrain Database (SOTER) project, the results of which will be used for the new global assessment of desertification.

F. Information

11. Four issues of the Desertification Control Bulletin, a special issue of Our Planet on desertification, the World Map of Present-day Landscapes and a study on the interactions of desertification and climate were completed. Copies of publications and other documents on desertification control were widely disseminated.

II. COORDINATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PACD WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

12. The marked increase in joint activities in desertification control within the United Nations system and with other organizations, such as NGOs, covered fields such as strategic planning, assessment methodologies, scientific aspects of desertification, environmental information systems and operational field activities. This was particularly evident during the negotiation process of the Convention, where coordinated support was provided to the ad hoc secretariat and to Governments in affected countries, in the definition of the technical scientific and political issues involved and in the formulation of the texts of the Convention and the regional annexes.

13. Cooperation with NGOs increased in line with the role assigned to them in Agenda 21, and the cross-cutting nature of desertification control led to a growth of cooperation with centres of excellence and academic institutions. Similarly, linkages between different aspects of desertification as reflected in the various chapters of Agenda 21 also encouraged cooperation and coordination.

III. NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

14. UNEP played a notable role in the negotiation process for the Convention of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Convention to Combat Desertification (INCD), including substantive financial and technical support to the secretariat, to regional and subregional organizations, and to affected countries, for case-studies on desertification and for the participation of NGOs in the negotiation process. UNEP also contributed to the establishment of the International NGO Network on Desertification (RIOD). The success of UNEP efforts in providing support to African Governments, NGOs and subregional organizations for the negotiation process is reflected in the fact that 42 of the 53 countries in Africa had signed the Convention by the end of 1994.

15. UNEP participated actively, with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Development Bank (ADB), in the joint secretariat, in the substantial input of OAU to the Convention and in the OAU Ad Hoc Group of Experts on desertification, which developed Africa's contribution to the negotiation process and drafted the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa, the resolution on urgent action for Africa and strategies for negotiating and implementing the Convention. In the second half of 1994, attention moved to planning activities for implementing the Convention, especially concerning urgent action in Africa, and to continuing support for the interim secretariat.

16. UNEP contributed substantively to background knowledge on desertification, particularly in relation to emerging issues. UNEP urged that the "right to remain" for those who so wish be incorporated in the Almeria Statement on desertification and migration. Studies on the social aspects of desertification, its effects on migration, the linkages between desertification and both biodiversity and climate were carried out and work on the subject of gender issues and desertification was begun. The workshop "Listening to the people: social aspects of dryland management" held in Nairobi in December 1993 aimed to develop a better understanding of "community participation" and "bottom-up development", in order to make recommendations for achieving sustainable development in the drylands. The success-story evaluations will provide tools for use in the community-level implementation of the NAPCDs requested under the Convention.

IV. FINANCING AND OTHER MEASURES IN SUPPORT OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

17. UNEP participated with the other Global Environment Facility (GEF) partners in the preparation of an issues paper on the funding of the incremental costs of activities concerning land degradation, as they relate to the four GEF focal areas and on the operational strategy paper, both for consideration by the GEF Council.

V. ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUDANO-SAHELIAN OFFICE

18. The UNSO programme focused on five major areas: the Convention process; national plans of action; drought preparedness and mitigation; environmental information systems; and local-level natural resources management. These were supported by information and resource mobilization activities.
19. In addition to support for African countries, UNDP/UNSO, as a member of the joint secretariat, supported OAU in the negotiation process for the Convention, in subregional consultations and for the OAU Expert Group on Desertification. After June 1994, attention turned to the preparation of NAPCDs, through support to national forums of partners, subregional organizations and NGOs.
20. The strategic framework processes programme continued, with attention being given to strengthening and ensuring coordination among national and local anti-desertification authorities; developing NPACDs; community empowerment; and harmonization in natural resources management programmes. In cooperation with the World Bank and ADB, the Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa (NESDA) was established to operationalize the concept of sustainable development in Africa.
21. A programme was launched in East Africa to build capacity in drought-preparedness and mitigation in Ethiopia and provide support to the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) for the preparation of a regional disaster- and drought-management strategy.
22. Concerning environmental information systems, the focus was on improved national and regional exchange of environmental information on a demand-driven, participatory basis, through the definition of priority needs in information, training and institutional mechanisms to manage environmental information. Work to identify and test desertification indicators for use at project level also began.
23. Project reviews attempted to identify constraints on implementation at local level, and country dialogue to exchange information among natural-resources-management projects was promoted. New approaches to land management, pastoralism and community participation were studied and developed. Two innovative projects combining anti-desertification efforts with schemes for carbon sequestration were funded during the GEF pilot phase.
24. Information dissemination and the publications programme continued with the regular updates on INCD negotiations, a poster, and technical publications providing background information to major themes of the Convention.
25. In response to the demands of Agenda 21 and the Convention, negotiations were begun in order to reorientate the joint venture mechanism into a Partnership to implement chapter 12 of Agenda 21 worldwide, and UNDP/UNSO began a resource mobilization campaign for the implementation of the Convention and, in particular, the resolution on urgent action for Africa.
26. As the central entity within UNDP coordinating UNDP system activities in desertification control, UNSO also developed a UNDP system-wide anti-desertification strategy.



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IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

Earthwatch, environment monitoring and assessment

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to the request contained in General Assembly resolution 48/192 of 21 December 1993 for "a report on the activities of the Programme in environmental monitoring, containing proposals and recommendations within the context of Agenda 21 and a review of Earthwatch".** The General Assembly in that resolution also invited the Governing Council to consider the report at its eighteenth session and submit its conclusions and recommendations to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, through the Economic and Social Council. The present report should be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General on chapter 40 of Agenda 21: Information for Decision-making and Earthwatch, based on material assembled in partnership by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD) and UNEP as Task Managers for chapter 40 and for Earthwatch, respectively (UNEP/GC.18/8), as well as with the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) report to the Governing Council on the United Nations System-wide Earthwatch (UNEP/GC.18/22). The report of the Secretary-General considers the broader context within which Earthwatch operates in responding to Agenda 21. It will be presented to the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and the Council may wish to consider any action taken or proposed by that session.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

- (a) Note the report and associated information documents and urge all partner agencies and programmes to cooperate in implementing the system-wide Earthwatch;

* UNEP/GC.18/1.

** The term "Earthwatch" has been used since Stockholm, often ambiguously, to refer both to UNEP's programme in the area of environment assessment and to the United Nations system-wide environment assessment activities. Although attempts have been made in the past few years to confine its use to the United Nations system-wide context, as in "United Nations system-wide Earthwatch", conventional usage persists in applying "Earthwatch" to UNEP's environment assessment activities, to the relevant system-wide activities, or to both. In the present report, the term "Earthwatch" is confined to the United Nations system-wide context.

(b) Endorse the recommendations of the ACC Report to the Governing Council (UNEP/GC.18/22) regarding the development of approaches to the linking of socio-economic and environmental assessment and reporting by UNEP and the system-wide Earthwatch;

(c) Endorse the refocused UNEP strategy to undertake, at the request of Governments or their representative bodies, policy-relevant assessment and reporting of environment and development issues of international significance through cooperating networks of appropriate national and regional agencies, organizations or institutions, and to promote the capacity development of data and information management in those bodies situated in developing countries as necessary and appropriate to ensure their full participation.

The United Nations System-Wide Earthwatch

1. In response to the United Nations General Assembly resolutions 44/224 and 48/192 to UNEP Governing Council decision 16/37 and to Agenda 21 (chapters 38.22 (d), 40.8 and 40.13), the United Nations system-wide Earthwatch is being revitalized as a closely linked collaborative set of international efforts to coordinate, harmonize and integrate observing, assessment and reporting activities. This requires timely information on the status and trends of key global resources, the pressures on them, the variables and processes in both natural and human systems and the range of possible responses to problems in these areas. It also requires a more rapid flow of information through the system and the more direct targeting of decision-making processes, so that policy makers can receive more timely and appropriate information.

2. The United Nations system-wide Earthwatch cannot be content to assess each problem in isolation, but must examine them in combination and draw out the key policy issues to be addressed by the international community. In this regard, the ACC report to the Governing Council (UNEP/GC.18/22) recommends that UNEP and the system-wide Earthwatch should continue to develop approaches to the linking of socio-economic and environmental assessment and reporting, and requests the Earthwatch Working Party to give further attention to the conceptual issues involved. Each participating agency should, within the limitations of available resources, strengthen its contributions to information for decision-making and improve its linkages with cooperating partners. UNEP, in its coordinating role for the environment, should focus on how all of the parts fit together into an integrated whole.

3. The Earthwatch Working Party of all the concerned United Nations organizations was set up to facilitate the taking of decisions in common, in order to develop concrete plans and increase efficiency and effectiveness by reducing redundancy. UNEP has established a small Earthwatch secretariat to maintain continuous liaison between the partners and to assist in implementing common activities. It is envisaged that many functions of Earthwatch can be carried by ad hoc groups of experts drawn from all of the agencies. Some of the first initiatives being developed are described in the report of the Secretary-General on chapter 40: Information for Decision-making and Earthwatch, developed jointly by UNEP and DPCSD, which contains annexes elaborating on the principal agency and inter-agency elements supporting Earthwatch and which highlights the need for all States to support the Earthwatch process, including through the provision of expertise and data.

4. On the basis of an in-depth study of Earthwatch*** and the increased collaboration now established, and the results of the review of Chapter 40 by the CSD and the review of Earthwatch by the UNEP Governing Council, the critical needs to implement Earthwatch across the United Nations system in close cooperation with Governments are being defined (reports of the Earthwatch Working

*** "The United Nations system-wide Earthwatch programme", 10 March 1995.

Party, 1-2 June 1994 and 22-23 March 1995). A major task will be to conceive an internationally accepted policy and coordination framework for Earthwatch. The requirements will be assembled into a coherent package of specific, well-targeted activities, together with proposals for long-term funding strategies for interested Governments and other donors as a further step towards the effective implementation of this important dimension of Agenda 21.

Environment Monitoring

5. Building on the experience of the Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS) and other efforts, major international scientific planning and inter-agency cooperative efforts are underway to advance a set of complementary global observing systems - the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), and the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS) - covering the major environmental compartments. These systems intend to go beyond inherently time-limited research programmes towards the operational data collection and assessment necessary to identify and respond to the long-term and widespread changes which may affect the human condition. UNEP is a co-sponsor of all these systems and, logically, their close interrelation and complementarity should be ensured as part of Earthwatch. A realistic and long-term funding strategy must be developed.

6. UNEP sees a particular role for itself in trying to minimize, to the extent possible, the data disparities between countries. In this regard, Earthwatch is exploring the potential to use schools, NGOs, the media and other groups in building a more complete picture of the status of species, land uses, development activities, pollution problems and other characteristics of the human and natural environment as inputs for state-of-the-environment reporting and as a basis for selective continued monitoring of national and global trends and for filling data gaps.

Environment Assessment Within UNEP

7. In response to the mandates in Agenda 21 and to the growing demands for environmental information that take development aspects into consideration, UNEP has reviewed its monitoring, assessment and reporting functions. The refocused environment assessment programme of UNEP, to be coordinated by the Division of Environment Assessment, includes the assessment and reporting functions of GEMS, incorporating the former State of the Environment Unit, the data management functions of the Global Resource Information Database (GRID), the capacity-building and regional networking of the environment and natural resources information networks, and United Nations system-wide Earthwatch coordination.

8. The programme has been reshaped to attend more explicitly to the needs of policy makers and to the data and information-handling capabilities of countries. It is geared towards making the best use of UNEP's own areas of comparative advantage: global and regional assessment and reporting; data and information management, harmonization and dissemination; regional environment and natural resources information network servicing. The proposed programme structure addresses the needs for policy-relevant information products supported by a scientifically-valid, user-friendly information base developed through regional networks of capable information providers, integrators and users. This approach has received broad acceptance in several areas: by Governments in regional users' consultations; by the United Nations Development Programme in defining joint activities, especially in the Asia and Pacific region; by the science community and NGO partners; and by the agencies involved in the Earthwatch Working Party.

9. The programme has developed a strategic plan to weave sectoral and regional assessments and the biennial Global Environment Outlook series into a process which will culminate in the 2002 decadal state-of-the-environment report. The framework on which the process will be based is currently being developed through international consultations. It provides for linking socio-economic driving forces with observed impacts on the environment and human welfare. United Nations system-wide efforts to develop indicators for sustainable development (see paragraph 12) are also based on this framework.

10. The assessment process will give priority attention to analysis of the interactions between environment and development, identification of current and potential emerging issues of international importance and possible effective strategies in response to the major pressures exerted on the environment and on human welfare. UNEP assessments and reports are being produced through participatory processes, drawing on the best available expertise and knowledge existing at national, regional and global institutes, steered by a growing global network of collaborating institutes and relevant United Nations agencies. They rely on regional policy consultations throughout the production process to reflect priority issues and concerns and ensure that the assessment findings have operational relevance. Associated benefits are a better scientific understanding of the relationships between environment and the socio-economic fabric of life and better tools to analyse and quantify these relationships as well as their projected impacts in the future.
11. In full cooperation with United Nations partners, particularly DPCSD and the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSTAT), and with scientific groups, such as the Scientific Council on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE), the environment assessment programme is contributing to the internationally harmonized development of sustainable development indicators for measuring progress in their particular sectors on priority issues, and to provide countries with a range of choice of indicators suitable to specific environmental, social and economic settings (see UNEP/GC.18/8, "Progress report, including a plan of action, on the development and use of environmental indicators"). In addition, UNEP is planning an indicators network to facilitate information flow among those working in the field. The organizations cooperating in the United Nations system-wide Earthwatch (see paragraphs 1-4) should be able to help DPCSD to support national efforts to use indicators for policy-making and as guides to sustainability, as well as in reporting to CSD.
12. UNEP's environment assessment programme is building on the success of activities such as GRID for information management, data harmonization and dissemination. Thus, the data and information management component of the Division of Environment Assessment is operating a computerized catalogue ("meta-database") on environmental data and information, developing critical datasets for assessments and assisting and supporting national Governments, regional data networks and other programmes in their efforts to improve access to and management of relevant and meaningful data and information on the environment.
13. The regionally focused institutional capacity-enhancement and servicing component of the programme aims to build a sustainable information base for both national and international assessment and reporting. The Environment and Natural Resource Information Networks (ENRIN) provide an enabling environment for acquiring, handling, sharing and analysing environmental data and generating policy-relevant information. Predicated on partnerships with donors and other United Nations agencies, particularly UNDP, this programme component is linking regional and national institutions in a cooperative network to address issues of particular regional significance.
14. A realistic funding strategy for UNEP's environment assessment programme needs to include the following elements: ensuring adequate and sufficient core funding within UNEP to maintain a basic assessment functionality and to provide the forum for regional or global cooperation; ensuring partnership with national agencies through the decentralized national networks of UNEP's environment assessment programme; developing close working partnerships with multilateral and bilateral donors active in the field of environment and sustainable development to coordinate and implement priority activities and programmes; identifying agency national focal points to guide in harnessing existing national capacities, with capacity-building assistance as necessary, to ensure programmes address national needs as well as issues of international significance within cooperating international environment assessment networks.
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POLICY ISSUES: EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

Cleaner Production, environmental technology assessment,
Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local
Level, development of international guidelines on
information on potential environmental impacts
that exporters of a technology could
feasibly provide to importers

Report by the Executive Director**Summary**

To respond to Governing Council decision 17/17 on transfer of environmentally sound technology and to decision 17/18, operative paragraph 4, on technology transfer to minimize the generation of hazardous waste, UNEP has further developed the Cleaner Production Programme, including Environmental Technology Assessment (EnTA) activities. The Awareness and Prevention for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL) Programme is also related to those decisions. Developments in Cleaner Production, EnTA and APELL over the last two years were reviewed at three senior-level advisory group meetings/seminars, held in October and December 1994. The present report highlights the achievements of each of the programmes. In its decision 17/17, the Governing Council also requested the Executive Director to investigate the feasibility of developing international guidelines for the information on potential environmental impacts that exporters of a technology should provide to importers. The conclusions are detailed in section III.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council might wish to consider adopting a decision along the following lines:

The Governing Council**(a) Notes with satisfaction:**

The progress made worldwide in promoting cleaner and safer industrial production, including processes and products, through the Awareness and Prevention for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL), Cleaner Production, and Environmental Technology Assessment (EnTA) Programmes,

* UNEP/GC.18/1.

as an effective approach for the protection of human life, the environment and property, and for the prevention of industrial pollution and the wasteful use of resources, particularly in developing countries;

The initiatives of several Governments, United Nations and intergovernmental organizations, industry and business associations, and non-governmental organizations in supporting UNEP programmes in this field;

The role UNEP has played in disseminating these activities and in supporting national and regional initiatives, particularly in developing countries;

(b) Calls upon Governments to continue to give these programmes a high priority in their development policies and programmes, to support the efforts needed to promote them, as well as to provide and/or channel the technical and financial support conducive to these initiatives, particularly amongst small and medium-scale enterprises;

(c) Calls upon United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations and donor countries to continue to support these initiatives at the national and regional levels;

(d) Calls upon national, regional and international funding agencies and banks to recognize the financial benefits of these programmes and to take the necessary steps to include them in their financing programmes;

(e) Calls upon the Executive Director of UNEP to:

Continue to support Governments and industry in developing Cleaner Production demonstration projects, particularly in developing countries and small and medium-scale enterprises, and to continue to support and monitor the activities of the National Cleaner Production Centres;

Continue to develop UNEP information services on cleaner and safer industrial production, using a variety of delivery systems;

Continue to develop appropriate tools for the initiation and implementation of UNEP's programmes in the field of cleaner and safer industrial production;

Proceed to develop international guidelines on information on potential environmental impacts that technology exporters or suppliers should provide to technology importers or users;

Report to the Governing Council in its next regular session on progress made.

I. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CLEANER PRODUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT PROGRAMMES

1. A total of 160 participants from 40 countries attended the third High-Level Advisory Seminar, hosted by Poland in November 1994, and reviewed the progress in the Cleaner Production Programme and proposed recommendations on its future development.

Main findings

- * UNEP, as per Agenda 21, has provided leadership in promoting Cleaner Production, a preventative approach, leading to more efficient use of raw materials and pollution prevention;

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- * Awareness of Cleaner Production continues to grow amongst Governments and industry in most countries. However, there are tremendous opportunities for further progress, in particular in small and medium-sized enterprises. In developing countries and countries with economies in transition, a 30 to 80 per cent reduction in emissions and in use of raw materials is possible, with low-cost, quick payback Cleaner Production alternatives. However, access to funding for Cleaner Production investments is often difficult;
- * There is a better understanding of the various economic, technological, and institutional barriers to Cleaner Production. However, the corresponding solutions to overcome such barriers are not yet in place;
- * More and more international organizations are involved in the Cleaner Production network.

Recommendations from the High-Level Seminar

- * Governments need to give Cleaner Production high priority in policy and programme development, particularly in adjusting macro-economic policies, providing technical and financial support to encourage the widespread adoption of Cleaner Production, particularly among small and medium-scale enterprises;
- * Cleaner production activities need to go beyond large-scale transnational enterprises and be fully integrated into all enterprise activities and operations, at all levels, and across all industry sectors. More industry research needs to be directed towards Cleaner Production techniques;
- * Well-designed education and training is needed at different levels to move Cleaner Production beyond awareness-raising to actual behaviour modification and the widespread dissemination of the use of Cleaner Production tools;
- * Transfer of good quality, industry sector-specific, easy-to-access information in a variety of ways is a basic requirement for the promotion of Cleaner Production;
- * Funding is required not only for capital investment, but also for awareness-raising, information dissemination, capacity-building and demonstration projects;
- * UNEP needs to continue to strengthen its Cleaner Production Programme, bearing in mind the above recommendations, particularly in information exchange; development of policy and implementation tools; education and training; strengthening and increasing the scope and depth of the working groups; and supporting effective National Cleaner Production Centres and similar institutions.

II. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AWARENESS AND PREPAREDNESS FOR EMERGENCIES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL (APELL) PROGRAMME OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS

The third biennial senior-level expert meeting was held in Paris in December 1994 to review the progress of APELL and to propose recommendations for its future orientation. Over 80 participants from 35 countries took part.

Implementation of APELL

- * New initiatives were started in different parts of the world, in Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Peru), Asia (China, India, Indonesia, Thailand), Eastern Europe (Baltic States, Russian Federation) and Africa (Senegal).
- * A notable feature of implementation has been the cooperation among and coordination of inputs from a large number of United Nations organizations and other intergovernmental organizations and other intergovernmental organizations, Governments, NGOs, industrial associations and business associations.

Expansion of the scope of APELL operations

- * Work has started to extend the APELL process to transport systems (with help from Sweden) and to ports (in cooperation with the International Maritime Organization). Manuals for each application have been drafted and are currently under review in preparation for pilot project implementation.

Recommendations for future orientations

- * Continue to investigate effective methods of communication with the local community;
- * Continue information exchange on safer management practices and techniques;
- * Continue closer integration of APELL activities with those of UNEP, and other United Nations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the fields of technology, health and safety;
- * Develop more tools for APELL implementation and for training in APELL operations;
- * Start more demonstration projects;
- * Seek new sources of funding and in-kind contributions to meet increasing demand for APELL.

III. INFORMATION ON POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS THAT EXPORTERS
OF A TECHNOLOGY COULD FEASIBLY PROVIDE TO IMPORTERS

Concerning environmental releases and potentially adverse effects

- * A description and quantification of the releases, including emissions and discharges to air, surface water and groundwater, soil, and solid waste and hazardous waste streams;
- * A description of the potentially adverse effects of these releases on human health and safety and ecological systems;
- * The demand of the technology for raw materials (including toxic or hazardous materials), water and energy and the potential environmental implications of providing them;
- * The potential environmental impacts of products produced by the technology, including impacts of product use, discard and disposal.

Concerning environmental monitoring and management programmes

- * A description of the environmental monitoring programme for the technology, including emissions and ambient monitoring to be carried out, along with a description of the sampling and analysis methods to be used;
- * A description of the environmental management programme for the technology, including the actions that should be taken to minimize environmental releases and their potentially adverse effects;
- * A description of actions that should be taken in response to both routine and accidental releases;
- * The expertise and skills of management and personnel necessary to operate, maintain, monitor and manage the technology in an environmentally sound manner;
- * The maintenance and repair programme necessary for successful operation of the technology from an environmental point of view.

Concerning environmental performance of the technology in the exporters' home country and other locations

- * Identification of the locations where the technology has been operated in the past;
- * Description of the environmental standards applicable to the technology at those locations;
- * Copies of the environmental permits or licenses issued to the technology;
- * Identification of the environmental regulatory agencies responsible for issuing permits or monitoring environmental compliance of the technology at those locations;
- * The environmental compliance record of the technology at those locations, including identification of violations of environmental standards, environmental damages and adverse health effects and accidental releases that have occurred;
- * The environmental policy of the technology supplier with respect to exports; specifically, whether the expected technology is designed and intended for operation in accordance with the environmental standards in the suppliers' home country, or the most protective standards in other locations where the technology has operated.



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EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

Application of environmental norms by military establishments:
action taken by the secretariat for the implementation
of Governing Council decision 17/5

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The purpose of the present report is to outline activities taken by the secretariat for the implementation of Governing Council decision 17/5 of 21 May 1993, on application of environmental norms by military establishments. A summary of the information on the issues mentioned in the decision will be found in a supplement to this report.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

(a) Take note of the recommendation by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its second session, in May 1994, inviting UNEP to consider the feasibility of arranging regional meetings, in cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions and regional organizations, on the implementation of Governing Council decision 17/5 and on how national environmental plans for the military establishment relating to hazardous waste management can be designed and implemented;

(b) Authorize the Executive Director to arrange, within available resources, regional meetings, in cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions and regional organizations, for the implementation of Governing Council decision 17/5;

(c) Request the Executive Director to report to the Governing Council at its nineteenth regular session on the outcome of such regional meetings.

* UNEP/GC.18/1.

APPLICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NORMS BY MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS:
ACTION TAKEN BY THE SECRETARIAT FOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION 17/5

Introduction

1. Paragraph 20.22 (h) of Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, states that Governments should ascertain that their military establishments conform to their nationally applicable environmental norms in the treatment and disposal of hazardous wastes.

2. In its decision 17/5 of 21 May 1993, entitled "Application of environmental norms by military establishments", the Governing Council noted the role of the military sector in the promotion of national environmental goals and objectives in the transition to sustainable development and recognized the need for early action. By the decision, the Council encouraged Governments to establish a national environmental policy for the military sector and invited the Executive Director to collect information on:

(a) National preparations and activities in order to ascertain that their military establishments conform to their national environmental norms in the treatment and disposal of hazardous wastes;

(b) The contribution of the military sector in the achievement of national environmental policies;

(c) Assessments of the damage as well as the need for and feasibility of the clean-up and restoration of areas where damage to the environment has been caused by military activities;

The Council requested the Executive Director to report to it at its eighteenth session on the issues referred to in subparagraphs (a)-(c) above. The present report has been prepared in accordance with that request.

Action taken

3. On 2 May 1994, the Secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal sent a letter to the focal points designated by the Parties to the Convention, requesting the information as mentioned in paragraph 2 of decision 17/5. By 15 February 1995, several Governments had provided relevant information. A summary of the information from those Governments will be found in a supplement to the present report referred to in paragraph 8 below.

4. At its second session, held in New York from 16 to 27 May 1994, the Commission on Sustainable Development recalled and reaffirmed decision 17/5 and urged Governments to take action to implement it fully. The Commission invited UNEP to consider the feasibility of arranging regional meetings, in cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions and regional organizations, on the implementation of the decision and on how national environmental plans for the military establishment relating to hazardous waste management can be designed and implemented (see E/1994/33-E/CN.17/1994/20, chap. I, sect. E, paras. 186 and 187).

5. During the first session of the Committee on Environmental Policy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), held in Geneva on 30 and 31 May 1994, the delegation of Sweden expressed the view that UNEP in cooperation

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with ECE should follow up the decision taken at the second session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to consider the feasibility of arranging a regional meeting on the application of environmental norms by the military sector and declared its intention to organize a workshop on this topic.

6. Pursuant to Governing Council decision 17/5 and the recommendation of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Assistant Executive Director for Earthwatch Coordination and Environmental Assessment, on 18 August 1994, sent a letter to United Nations regional commissions and other relevant regional intergovernmental organizations seeking their views on the feasibility of organizing a workshop within the respective regions with a view to the implementation of the decision. A letter was sent also to the Government of Sweden concerning its statement at the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy and seeking its view on organizing a regional meeting. In response, ECE, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific have informed the secretariat that they are interested in arranging regional meetings. Within the ECE region, the Government of Sweden offered to host such a meeting. In December 1994, the secretariat of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) informed UNEP that the Government of the Philippines had shown its interest in hosting a workshop. In January 1995, the secretariat of the League of Arab States stated that it would put the matter before its Council in March 1995.

7. In relation to assessments of damage and to the need for and feasibility of clean-up and restoration of areas where damage to the environment has been caused by military activities, UNEP has initiated an expert study on legal issues relating to liability and compensation for environmental damage caused by military activities.

8. With regard to the ECE region, UNEP, in cooperation with ECE, will convene a Meeting on Military Activities and the Environment, to be hosted by the Government of Sweden in Linköping from 27 to 30 June 1995. The Meeting, taking into account the relevant experience of ECE member States, will consider the role of the military sector in the promotion of national environmental goals and objectives as well as the establishment of a national environmental policy for the sector, including practical ways and means of reaching environmental policy objectives. The Meeting will be attended by representatives of both environmental and military authorities in the countries concerned. During the Meeting, information on the issues mentioned in Governing Council decision 17/5 is expected to be collected. The resulting recommendations will be directed to the Governments of ECE member States, UNEP and ECE as a basis for future activities.

9. In its invitation to the Linköping meeting, UNEP requested of the Governments of the ECE member States to provide the secretariat, by the end of March 1995, with a brief paper containing the information addressing the issues referred to in decision 17/5. The secretariat will compile information received from those Governments and relevant international organizations and make it available to the Meeting. That information from the ECE member States, together with the information provided by the focal points designated under the Basel Convention, will be compiled and a summary will be made available to the Governing Council, as a supplement to the present report.



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POLICY ISSUES

Development of an international legally binding instrument for
the application of the prior informed consent procedure for
certain hazardous chemicals in international trade

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report reviews the work towards the development of a legally binding instrument for the application of the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure for chemicals in international trade carried out within the framework of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on the Implementation of the Amended London Guidelines for the Exchange of Information on Chemicals in International Trade, which was reconvened by the Executive Director in January 1993, pursuant to the request of the Governing Council in section 1, paragraph 8, of its decision 16/35 of 31 May 1991. It further reports on the response by UNEP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to the recommendation of the International Conference on Chemical Safety, held in Stockholm in April 1994, and the Commission on Sustainable Development at its second session, held in New York in May 1994, that the two organizations should continue to evaluate and address problems with the implementation of the voluntary PIC procedure and to develop effective legally binding instruments concerning the PIC procedure. By the present note, the Governing Council is invited to consider authorizing the Executive Director to start negotiations, together with FAO, for an international legally binding instrument for the application of the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals in international trade.

* UNEP/GC.18/1.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

- (a) Note with appreciation the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on the Implementation of the Amended London Guidelines and a task force established by the Working Group for the development of the instrument envisaged in chapter 19 of Agenda 21;
- (b) Note also a recommendation by the International Conference on Chemical Safety held in Stockholm in April 1994, and the Commission on Sustainable Development at its second session held in New York in May 1994, that the United Nations Environment Programme, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and in close consultation with other international organizations, continue to evaluate and address problems with the implementation of the voluntary PIC procedure and to develop effective legally binding instruments concerning the PIC procedure;
- (c) Further note an agreement at the FAO Council, at its one hundred and seventh session, held in Rome in November 1994, that the FAO secretariat should proceed with the preparation of a draft PIC convention as a part of the current FAO/UNEP programme on PIC and in cooperation with other international and non-governmental organizations concerned;
- (d) Authorize the Executive Director to convene, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and in consultation with Governments and other international organizations, within available resources, an intergovernmental negotiating meeting with a mandate to prepare an international legally binding instrument for the application of the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals in international trade;
- (e) Decide that the intergovernmental negotiating meeting shall commence its work in late 1995 or early 1996;
- (f) Request the Executive Director to convene, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, before the intergovernmental negotiating meeting, a meeting of government-designated experts to review progress in the implementation of the voluntary prior informed consent procedure, address problems associated with it, and consider major issues that need to be addressed by the intergovernmental negotiating meeting;
- (g) Also request the Executive Director to convene, together with the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, a diplomatic conference for the purpose of adopting and signing an international legally binding instrument for the application of the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals in international trade not later than early 1997;
- (h) Further request the Executive Director to invite relevant international organizations to participate in the negotiating process for the development of the instrument;
- (i) Call upon Governments that are in a position to do so to provide the necessary financial and technical resources to enable the full and effective functioning of the intergovernmental negotiating meeting, in particular, the full and effective participation of developing countries, and of countries with economies in transition.

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DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT FOR THE
APPLICATION OF THE PRIOR INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURE FOR
CERTAIN HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE

1. In its decision 16/35 of 31 May 1991, the Governing Council of UNEP, at its sixteenth session, requested the Executive Director to reconvene the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on the Implementation of the Amended London Guidelines for further urgent action, including work on strengthening the legal basis of the amended London Guidelines, taking into consideration, inter alia, experience gained in the implementation of the Guidelines and the PIC procedure. Furthermore, one of the objectives of programme area C of chapter 19 of Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, is "to achieve by the year 2000, as feasible, full participation in and implementation of the PIC procedure, including possible mandatory applications through legally binding instruments contained in the Amended London Guidelines and in the FAO International Code of Conduct, taking into account the experience gained within the PIC procedure" (Agenda 21, para. 19.38 (b)).
2. Pursuant to decision 16/35 of the Governing Council, the Executive Director reconvened the Ad Hoc Working Group, which held its third session in January 1993. The Ad Hoc Working Group recommended that, in light of chapter 19 of Agenda 21, UNEP should establish a task force to consider modalities for the development of a legally binding instrument for the application of the PIC procedure, including possible elements for the instrument. UNEP convened two meetings of the task force, in September 1993 and March 1994, with the participation of experts from Governments and representatives of relevant organizations. The task force reviewed experience in the implementation of the voluntary PIC procedure and considered elements which might be included in the instrument envisaged in chapter 19 of Agenda 21. The deliberations of the task force have resulted in a set of elements for such an instrument.
3. The fourth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group, held in Geneva in April 1994, was attended by Government-designated experts from 55 Governments and representatives of relevant organizations. The Working Group considered the results of the work of the task force in detail and further elaborated elements for a legally binding instrument for the application of the prior informed consent procedure (see UNEP/PIC/WG.1/4/5, annex). The Working Group recommended that a meeting of Government-designated experts should review the progress in the implementation of the voluntary PIC procedure under the amended London Guidelines and the development of the instrument.
4. Both the International Conference on Chemical Safety, held in Stockholm in April 1994 with the attendance of 114 Governments, and the Commission on Sustainable Development at its second session, held in New York in May 1994, recommended that "UNEP, together with FAO and in close consultation with other international organizations, continue to evaluate and address problems with the implementation of the voluntary PIC procedure and to develop effective legally binding instruments concerning the PIC procedure" (E/1994/33-E/CN.17/1994/20, chap.I, para.165). In July 1994, to further pursue the work for the development of a legally binding instrument for the application of the PIC procedure, the Executive Director circulated to all Governments the elements for the instrument identified by the Ad Hoc Working Group, inviting their comments. Those comments received by the UNEP secretariat will shortly be compiled in a document.

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5. In November 1994, having noted the work already done by UNEP for the development of a legally binding instrument for the application of the PIC procedure, the FAO Council, at its one hundred and seventh session, agreed that the FAO secretariat should proceed with the preparation of a draft legally binding instrument on the operation of the PIC procedure as part of the current FAO/UNEP programme on PIC and in cooperation with other international and non-governmental organizations concerned. The FAO Council discussed the time-frame required to develop a convention and many Council members considered it should be ready for adoption in 1997. The FAO Council agreed that the FAO should seek resources jointly with UNEP to finance the process for the preparation and the conclusion of a legally binding instrument.

6. To further discuss work to be done, UNEP, together with FAO, convened an informal consultative meeting in December 1994 to consider major issues related to the development of a legally binding instrument for the application of the PIC procedure. The meeting identified several major issues that will need to be addressed during negotiations for the development of such an instrument. Having noted the agreement at the FAO Council on the development of the instrument, the meeting suggested that the Executive Director of UNEP should seek a mandate to start negotiations on the development of such a legally binding instrument for the application of the PIC procedure from the Governing Council of UNEP at its eighteenth session, in May 1995, with a view to its conclusion possibly by 1997.

7. Should the Governing Council adopt such a decision at its eighteenth session, and dependent on the availability of the necessary financial resources, UNEP and FAO will organize the negotiating process for a legally binding instrument for the application of the PIC procedure, possibly starting in late 1995 or early 1996.

8. The financial resources necessary to enable successful negotiations and adoption of the instrument are estimated at 2.5 million United States dollars, which would cover meeting costs for one meeting of Government-designated experts (5 working days, in three languages), three sessions of an intergovernmental negotiating committee (7 working days for each session, in six languages), and a conference of plenipotentiaries (2 working days, in six languages) as well as support for participation in the negotiating process by developing countries and countries with economies in transition. In addition, it is expected that small meetings of technical and/or legal experts be convened during the inter-sessional period of envisaged meetings in order to address specific issues.



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ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMICS

Progress report, including a plan of action, on the development
and use of environmental indicators

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to Governing Council decision 17/22 of 21 May 1993, by which the Council requested the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to continue its work in the field of environmental indicators, in cooperation with the United Nations Statistical Office and the relevant specialized agencies, bearing in mind the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and also requested the Executive Director to submit to the Council at its eighteenth regular session a progress report, including a plan of action, on the development and use of environmental indicators. The report reviews progress made in the development and use of environmental indicators and, in particular, UNEP's activities in the area. It then sets out UNEP's plan of action on indicator work.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to take note of the present report and endorse or make recommendations on the UNEP plan of action in the field of environmental and sustainable development indicators to be carried out in collaboration with other agencies and parties.

* UNEP/GC.18/1.

I. PROGRESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS

1. Indicators are relevant to a vast number of environmental and developmental issues. They can guide data and information collection and reporting processes enabling us to better organize, synthesize and use information. They can play an important role in transforming information into action at national and international levels by providing support to problem identification, policy formulation and policy evaluation. The international acceptance and use of common or mutually compatible indicators could have added benefits such as: (i) international standardization and harmonization of the data collection processes; (ii) international compilation of national state-of-the-environment (SOE) reports and reports to forums such as the Commission on Sustainable Development; (iii) reduction of national reporting burdens.

2. Indicators are required for evaluating progress towards sustainable development at national and international levels (Agenda 21, Ch.40). As sustainable development involves the complex interaction of social, economic, institutional and environmental factors, indicators for sustainable development must reflect and incorporate these interactive forces if they are to be meaningful, reliable and useful for evaluation and predictive purposes. The United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), as task manager for chapter 40 of Agenda 21, and the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSTAT), with responsibility for the development of indicators are coordinating activities. Progress on developing sustainable development indicators will be presented and discussed at the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, in April 1995, together with a cooperative work programme of future activities being proposed to the Commission by the Secretary-General.

3. In comparison with their social and economic counterparts, environmental indicators remain less well developed, tested and less widely used at the present time and the underlying data bases are frequently less adequate. However, the development of environmental indicators has been high on the agenda of many national and international organizations in recent years.

4. UNEP's activities on indicator development have included:

(a) Publication in early 1994 of "An Overview of Environmental Indicators: State-of-the-art and perspectives";

(b) Participation in the development of criteria and indicators to guide management, conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;

(c) Collaboration in the development of indicator-based methodologies for assessment and mapping of desertification, for evaluating projects and activities in desertification control and dryland rehabilitation and for freshwater assessment;

(d) Use of indicators in economic tools such as environmental impact assessment (EIA) and environmental and natural resource accounting and valuation;

(e) Convening, in collaboration with UNSTAT, a Consultative Expert Group on Environmental and Sustainable Development Indicators. The major purpose of the Group was to enhance, through information sharing, collaboration and integration of indicator activities. A project on highly aggregated indicators for sustainable development was set up by the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) with the encouragement of this Group. UNEP has co-sponsored this project;

(f) Participation in the development of a menu of sustainable development indicators by DPCSD;

(g) Co-sponsoring and providing substantive inputs to a Belgian-hosted international workshop on indicators of sustainable development for decision-making, initiated by the SCOPE project. At this meeting UNEP and DPCSD presented a joint paper on "The Role of Indicators in Decision-Making". This paper, which will be available as a background document at the eighteenth session of the Council, formed the basis for a number of Workshop recommendations which will be presented to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its third session by the Governments of Belgium and Costa Rica.

II. UNEP'S PLAN OF ACTION IN INDICATORS

5. UNEP's specific plan of action in indicator work has been structured to fit within the framework of international indicator development activities whilst at the same time contributing to the need for improved information tools for UNEP's own assessment, reporting, management and policy guidance functions. It comprises four action areas:

(a) Contributions to the DPCSD-coordinated indicator work programme:

(i) Assist in the development of, and building international consensus on, a menu of indicators for evaluating progress towards sustainable development as follows:

a. Become lead actor for the preparation of methodologies for a set of specific indicators (ozone-depleting substances, mandated environmental impact assessments, the negotiation, adoption and ratification of multilateral environmental agreements, the enactment of environmental legislation and the establishment of related national institutions) and cooperate in the development of methodologies for others (including desertification, freshwater and ocean/coastal indicators);

b. Participate in a coordinated inter-agency programme on capacity-building and training for indicators use at national level using, amongst others, the regional environmental and natural resources information networks (ENRINs) of the UNEP Division of Environment Assessment (DEA);

c. Contribute to pilot country activities to apply the indicator framework (the UNEP/WHO HEADLAMP Project could provide a suitable vehicle for these activities);

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- (ii) Contribute to research into linkages associated with sustainable development indicators through support to a second phase of the SCOPE project and to indicator development work of the World Resources Institute and other institutes;
- (iii) Continue as a member of the DPCSD/UNSTAT Task Force on Indicators which will steer the indicator development process.

(b) Development of indicators in a selected number of areas commensurate with major UNEP programmes:

- (i) Continue collaboration in the activities outlined in paragraphs 4 (b), (c) and (d) above relating to the development of sectoral and economic indicators;
- (ii) Collaborate in the development and use of indicators and indicator-based methodologies in all sectoral, regional and global assessments coordinated or supported by the DEA;
- (iii) Collaborate in the development of a vulnerability index in support of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;
- (iv) Ensure that the developed indicators, when they pertain to national level, feed, as required, into the matrix of internationally agreed indicators, and those that pertain to global or regional level feed into UNEP assessments and reports;

(c) Promoting the use of indicators in state-of-the-environment reporting and for the organization and reporting of environmental data and information collection:

- (i) Use the regional environmental and natural resources information networks of the DEA to reach consensus on indicator use;
- (ii) Prepare a sourcebook for state-of-the-environment reporting (with Canadian and Dutch support) for reviewing different approaches and strategies to SOE reporting, including the use of indicators to guide the reporting;
- (iii) Contribute to regional projects of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which include identification and application of regionally relevant environmental and sustainable development indicators;

(d) Promoting indicator information exchange: develop, depending on the availability of funds, an international indicator exchange network and database to raise awareness of ongoing activities amongst actors in indicator development, and facilitate the selection of appropriate indicators by users. UNEP has already identified a number of agencies prepared to collaborate in this network and database and is setting up a collaborative procedure to look at modalities and costs.